

Chester Park June 18, 1864

102

My Dear Garrison

Since we parted last night, my thoughts have been much engaged upon the subject of our conversation; namely, the present unfortunate difference of opinion in the antislavery ranks, on the question of the presidential election, and the action which, in consequence of that difference, should be taken by the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at its meeting on Monday next. As a very solemn responsibility will attach to the acts of the Committee at that meeting, I trust that those who may come to it, will come in the spirit of wisdom, forbearance & love; with unclouded judgments, & minds

free from prejudice, passion, & the pride of
opinion. There should be no precipitancy.
When there shall be reason to doubt, there
will be occasion to pause. Time should
be taken for calm reflection - for a review
of the past, & a contemplation of the future.
The committee will be called to adjudicate
for parties scattered over the whole country.
The wishes, views and feelings of those who
are absent should be considered. The origin,
design and history of the Society should be
reverted to, and the light they shed, be brought
to bear upon present difficulties & complica-
tions. O, do not begin to discuss any moot
point, until you can do so in the spirit
of love one towards another. Love is clear-
sighted, accommodating, forgiving - quick
to recognize worth in others - quick to sa-
crifice personal feelings for the sake of
others.

Many courses will doubtless present themselves to the minds of those present. The following suggest themselves to my own mind And first, with regard to the Standard

The conduct of that paper might be left, as hitherto, to the unfettered discretion of the Editor, with an intimation at the same time, that he should keep in view the discordant opinions of the members of the Society on particular points.

2. It may be possible to define, for the guidance of the Editor, a Neutral Policy; according to which, ~~the~~ while the distinctive principles of the Society are maintained, there shall be no compromise of the views of any party, touching the Presidential election; nor any preference of one Candidate to another.

3. Or, it might be decided that the question of "who shall be supported for the presidency?" shall be an open question, and the columns of the Standard be free for the presentation of the claims of the respective Candidates, and for the discussion of the grounds on which this or that man is preferred.

4. Or, the Editor may be required to support the Candidate who may be considered by the majority of the Committee most deserving the office of President, in connection with the object of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

5. Or, the Standard might be discontinued during the present controversy, and the Society, as such, maintain the Status quo. If this were done, the

5
members of the Society would be individually responsible for the opinions they might express on the subject of the presidential election, and the Society would not be compromised by such opinions.

Finally, If the Committee should be of opinion that the time ^{has} ~~is~~ come to dissolve the Society, the question would then arise, "What measures should be adopted with a view to that end?"

If I might venture to express my own judgment, I should say, the American Anti Slavery Society ought not to dissolve upon the question of who is the better man to fill the office of President of the United States when the present presidential term shall expire?

The Society was originally formed to promote and obtain the abolition of Slavery.

It is the only recognized ^{anti Slavery} national organization in the Country, founded upon principles wholly irrespective of political considerations.

Slavery is not yet abolished, nor are the moral and religious principles upon which the Society is based, generally acknowledged.

There exists no difference of opinion in the Society, in reference to its fundamental principles.

The present antagonism relates to means, & not to principles & objects.

The platform of the Society does not require agreement among the

7
members of the body on the subject of
political instrumentalities.

The sole bond of union among the
members, is a common belief in the
sinfulness of Slavery, and the duty of
immediate & unconditional emancipation.

This sacred bond of union is not
necessarily impaired by a divergence
of views on the subject of the Presiden-
tial elections.

The Society stands pledged to continue
its existence and its work, till Slavery
has ceased to exist in the Country.

No one can tell to what perils the
Sacred Cause of Emancipation may now
yet be exposed, nor to what duties
the Society may now yet be summoned

by the exigencies of the Cause, ere it
wins a final and irrevocable triumph.

Whoever may be the next president,
whatever may be the character &
capacity of the man, the wisdom, the
vigilance and the energies of the Society
will be required.

A state of things may hereafter
arise, of a nature calculated to bring
into harmonious and earnest action
the elements which, for the present, are
in conflict. Let not, therefore, the possi-
bility of the future co-operation of these
elements be destroyed. Do not disturb
the forces which may yet be needed
to save the holy cause ^{from} disaster, - it
may be from shipwreck. I beseech
you most deliberately to consider well,

the consequences which might follow
from putting a premature termination
on, to an organization which, under God,
has effected so much, and for which
God & humanity may have yet a
great work to do.

Why may there not be diversity of opi-
nion upon matters which are non-spiritual,
and the Society still remain intact?

Why may there not be differences of
modes of action among those who have
the same object, and at the same time
identity and union in regard to such
principles of action? Why should not
each be left to act, upon subordinate
questions, upon his own convictions of
duty? When I look at the men who

10

are most at variance respecting measures,
I find that the actuating principle, the
animating desire, the object aimed at,
are the same - that they are straining
to reach the same goal, and alike
remembering those who are in bonds
as bound with them. Whom God hath
so joined together, by motives & ends so
pure and holy, let no man put asunder.

I would that your organization
should be preserved, if only that it
may cease / when it shall cease / at
a better time, and for a better cause
than at present. I would have it
declare itself dissolved / and not till
then / when the principles in which it
originated are recognized & established
- when the objects for which it came
into being are accomplished and

11

secured - when the occasion of parting stripes shall have ~~past~~ passed away, and time shall have shown whose judgment was the best - when those who belong to it shall come together, free from all feelings but those of mutual esteem and love, to thank God, as with one heart, that their work ^{really} is done & that their country is free from the guilt and curse of slavery.

These hasty lines - written since I took my breakfast - may prove to you the interest I take in the present state of affairs, & my deep sympathy with you in the task you are called to endure. If I have thrown out any hints which may await you on Monday, I shall be rewarded for my

anxiety & trouble.

Ever, respectfully

Your early & ever loving,

Still devoted friend

Geo Thompson

W. L. Garrison.